

Ethnic groups hit plan to cut funding

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STAFF REPORTER

A proposal to cut funding to ethnic groups has been assailed as an attack on "the heart and soul of the country."

Representatives of several ethnic organizations held a press conference yesterday to refute the findings of a government report that recommends cutting funding to ethnic groups.

"I'm shocked and disappointed. The report fails to show an understanding of the goals of the funded groups," Stephen Lee of the Chinese Canadian National Council told reporters gathered at the National Association of Japanese Canadians on Harbord St.

The report compiled for Heritage Canada by Brighton Research, an Ottawa-based company, concludes that giv-

ing money to ethnic groups creates the impression the government is catering to special interest groups.

"We're not special interest groups. We are the heart and the soul of the country," said Elaine Prescod, director of the Coalition of Visible Minority Women, adding that the funding her group gets is a "drop in the bucket."

Heritage Canada has a budget of \$18.6 million for multicultural projects, but only 13 per cent goes to "uni-cultural single-based" organizations. The rest goes to everything from the Urban Alliance on Race Relations to the Canadian Association of Police Chiefs.

Lee said his group received less than \$50,000 in 1995 and Herman Stewart, president of the Jamaican Canadian Association, said it received \$29,000

this year, down from \$40,000.

"The message is, with an election coming up, the government is shifting its focus," Stewart said. "But they can't fight the deficit on the backs of ethnic organizations."

He added that the groups are not protesting the reduction of funding, but the way the government did it.

All groups complained that the Brighton researchers never asked them for input and they didn't even see the report until after "it was nicely bound."

Prescod said it is ironic that the Liberals, under Pierre Trudeau, introduced multiculturalism 25 years ago and it is a Liberal government dismantling it.

"We want the Prime Minister to take

a stand on this. We hope the government will re-commit itself to multiculturalism," Stewart said.

The Star learned late yesterday that Hedy Fry, secretary of state for multiculturalism and women's issues, will be in Toronto today to announce a new Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

"The foundation is a Liberal red book commitment and will operate at arm's length from the government," Heritage Canada spokesperson Arthur Wilczynski said.

He also defended the Brighton report — officially called *Strategic Evaluation Of Multiculturalism Programs* — as just one of several studies done about the effectiveness of Canada's multicultural policy.

